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EDITORIAL.

THE RELATION OF ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL WORK IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION.

IN an article on the training of the teacher, Colonel Parker once wrote : "A four years' course in a good college should supplement a high-school course before the student enters upon professional training. It is far preferable to have a college course without professional training than to have only a high-school course with training. The requirement should be the college course and professional training." And again : "There is no question that the fundamental cause of imperfect teaching is ignorance of the subjects to be taught, nor that the abuse of the text-books is largely due to the same cause ; it is also true that the mere study of methods cannot be substituted for deficiency in knowledge of subjects taught."

These words show the ideal of the scholarship necessary for teaching held by him who was the founder, in an educational sense, of the School of Education. The union of the Chicago Institute, as this school was first named, with the University of Chicago was the realization of Colonel Parker's desire to see the widest opportunities for culture within the reach of the teacher. This union also reveals a recognition on the part of the University that teaching has become a profession demanding its own particular kind of preparation. The long struggle for special training begun in this country by Horace Mann appears to have culminated in the attempt of the higher institutions of learning to furnish practical work in pedagogy.

Perhaps the slow advance of the movement for the professional training of teachers has been due, in part, to the fact that much of the work done in this direction in the past was without scientific foundation. The idea of such a thing as methods in teaching suggests to the average person something in the nature of a patent process for driving facts into the mind, a piece of machinery that has a merely temporary vogue, and is then cast aside as a worn-out thing in favor of some new invention. The very term "method" has been brought into such disrepute that there are few indeed who would care to take up the cudgels in defense of its ordinary acceptation. This attitude is the outcome of training that implies fixed ways of presenting subjects of study, routine plans of work, and special devices for obtaining results. Such training has no relation to principle, and naturally puts under a ban the whole matter of professional study. There is no place for the imitator in the art of teaching. The teacher, especially, needs flexibility of mind, the power to adapt theories to meet the demands of a given situation. It is safe to say that whatever leads one teacher to copy a scheme of work from another, however great the authority, tends to make insight into educational principle impossible.

In the groping toward a scientific basis for education which has characterized the last few years it is small wonder that details of procedure have been exalted above principles. As a matter of fact, few principles have seemed sufficiently clear to furnish a practical guide. Belief in what the old psychology taught about the faculties of the mind had to be torn up by the roots and a new faith established before there could be any definite foundation to build upon. At present we are beginning to emerge from the era of vagueness, and, with the advance of scientific investigation in psychology and sociology, are gradually rationalizing our methods of work. Dr. Dewey has said : "I believe that with the growth of psychological service, giving added insight into individual structure and laws of growth, and with growth of social science, adding to our knowledge of the right organization of individuals, all scientific resources can be utilized for the purposes of education." These advances make new demands upon teachers and call for a new kind of preparation for their work.

The first necessity for teaching is an acquaintance with the general conditions of mental growth, and with the special characteristics of different stages of development, and, to this end, the study of psychology is of the greatest importance. Perhaps the most significant change in our educational theory comes from the discovery of the close relation of thought and action in all sound living. Slowly but surely the reconstruction of the school goes forward, transforming it from a field of mere acquirement to one of active experience as well. It is no longer set apart from the community for the acquisition of knowledge, but is organized in accordance with the community around certain fundamental social occupations. The recognition of the activities in the school, with the consequent reorganization of the curriculum and methods, compels teachers not only to equip themselves with requisite scholarship, but also to understand the basis of knowledge and its intimate connection with the affairs of real life.

The School of Education brings its students into contact with the great changes that are taking place in elementary and secondary schools. By this means they learn something of the demands of advanced educational thought. To give this general view of the educational situation is the purpose of the earliest professional work in the school. By observation in the practice school, and by discussion of the curriculum and the methods of study employed therein, the students gain a standpoint for judging the adequacy of their own acquirements and an impulse toward a more complete and thorough scholarship. This enables them to select subjects of study more wisely than would otherwise be possible, and thus to do college work of the greatest advantage to their future needs. While it would, no doubt, be unwise to narrow their course to those branches which they expect to use directly in their teaching, yet in the multiplicity of possible studies some modification may well be made with reference to the particular demands of their chosen calling.

Such work also gives students the advantage of seeing a definite use for the knowledge gained. While pleasure in investigation for its own sake may furnish a sufficient motive for work to the mature student, still the complete educational value is obtained by making practical application of knowledge or by seeing its possibilities in social service. It is possible, even with students of university age, to have too great a separation, if not a complete divorce, between knowledge and its end, and thus to educate individuals who can make no valuable use of what they know.

The professional work also involves consideration of subject-matter from the standpoint of the child's attitude toward it as well as from that of the teacher. The studies of the curriculum represent formulations of knowledge made as the result of social experience, and can be appreciated by the child only in so far as his own experience gives him the power to interpret them. It is necessary that the teacher should consider the ability of children, with their varying experiences, to comprehend and use the knowledge resulting from the experiences of others. Teaching implies not only presentation of subject-matter, but also insight into the connection of this material with the mental attitude of a given group of individuals at a given time. The subject-matter must be put into such a form that the children may make it their own and utilize it in gaining further experience.

The teacher's problem is threefold: first, to guide experience and to detect the meaning of a particular attitude of mind; second, to select from the vast accumulation of knowledge the portion necessary for the next step in growth; and, third, to formulate this knowledge, not in general terms, but in the best way for its comprehension under these especial conditions. If this be true, it seems apparent that professional training should furnish an opportunity for discussion of the adaptation of subject-matter to children of different ages and different stages of growth. Sufficient work of this character is necessary, not only to illustrate the theory involved, but to form the habit of presenting studies in their relation to experience. Since it seems natural for the average mind to adopt methods in teaching similar to those pursued in its own education, the establishment of a new view of the meaning of study requires time, varying in amount according to the characteristics of individuals. Practice in organizing subject-matter in relation to the needs of different groups of children may prevent teachers from relapsing, after a brief struggle, into their previous habits of work.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the study of psychology furnishes the student with the principles required for interpreting attitudes of mind, and for the formulation of subject-matter in relation to individual needs. It is only as psychology gives this foundation that education can claim to be a science. When teachers are equipped with adequate knowledge of the subjects of study, and a thorough acquaintance with psychology, and have sufficient practice in applying psychology to the adaptation of subject-matter in teaching, it is reasonable to expect a rapid improvement in the educational situation.

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